Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women: Our Sisters are not Invisible

FVPSA 2019 Tribal Grantee Meeting
Presented by: Carolyn DeFord
My Inspiration
"This was the last time I seen her."

Play Video
https://www.facebook.com/aljazeera/videos/180663199539097/?v=180663199539097
More Than a Missing Person
The Forgotten Victims: The Families Left Behind
“Ambiguous loss can freeze the grief process. People can’t get over it, they can’t move forward, they’re frozen in place.”
—psychologist Pauline Boss, PhD

• The Effects of Ambiguous Loss
• Coping: Making Sense When it Doesn’t Make Any Sense
Understanding The Issue
What Are The Facts

• Native American/Alaska Native women go missing and are murdered at higher rates than any other ethnic group.
• Homicide is the third leading cause of death for Native women ages 10-24.
• 75% of those homicides are caused by domestic violence/intimate partner violence.
• More than 4 in 5 Native women have experienced violence.
  • Over half have experienced sexual assault and domestic violence
  • Almost 50% have experienced stalking
As of May 4th, Washington State Patrol Reports 112 total missing Native Americans:
- 59 men/boys
- 57 women/girls

In 2017, Native American females accounted for 633 (0.7 percent) of the active missing person cases in NCIC.

Total, Native Americans made up 1.8 percent of ALL active missing person records entered into NCIC.

Understanding The Issue
Missing Person Categories

Runaway
Parent/Family Abduction
Kidnapping
Suspicious Circumstance
Catastrophic
Suicide
Lost
Endangered
Voluntary Missing
Risk Factors Rooted in Historical Trauma

Historical trauma is entirely different than consciously holding onto the past when it resides in your ancestral memory and DNA. It results in numerous defense mechanisms, developmental malfunctions, and behavioral issues. This is scientific and is supported in studies.

~Tony Ten Fingers/Wanbli Nata’u, Oglala Lakota
Historical Trauma

“Historical trauma is the cumulative, multigenerational, collective experience of emotional and psychological injury in communities and in descendants.”

Historical Trauma

Causes

- Colonialization
- Acculturation
- Stereotypes
- Internalized oppression
- Lateral oppression
- Residential Schools
- Indian Policy
Historical Trauma
Symptoms

• Poor health
• Unemployment, poverty
• Mental health, including high rates of depression, anxiety, PTSD
• Addiction and related deaths
• Broken families, domestic violence, foster care
• Sexual and physical violence
• Suicide
• Overwhelming shame, guilt, hopelessness
What’s Going On?
Domestic Violence and Homicide

• Homicide is the third leading cause of death for:
  Native women ages 10-24
  Native boys ages 10-34
• Domestic Violence is responsible for nearly 75% of Native women homicides
• Prevalence of Human Trafficking
The Link Between MMIW and HTIC

- Poverty and homelessness
- High rates of Domestic and Sexual Violence
- Trafficking victims identifying as intimate partners
- Runaway youth
- Historical Trauma leading to compound trauma
- Jurisdictional issues
- Relocation leading to fractured cultural ties
- Broken homes and familial trafficking
- High rates of mental illness and substance abuse
Kelsey Emily Collins
Missing Since May 9, 2009

- Sex: Female
- Race: White/African American
- DOB: April 30, 1991
- Age at Missing: 18
- Missing From: Everett, WA
- Height: 5'6" (167.64 cm)
- Weight: 155 lbs (70.31 kg)
- Eyes: Green
- Hair: Brown
- Contact Agency: Everett Police Department
- Phone: (425) 257-8400

Information and Details:
Kelsey is missing from home. Her nickname is Emily. If you have information or have seen this missing person, please contact the law enforcement agency listed below:

Submitting Agency and Phone:
Everett Police Department – (425) 257-8400

WSP Missing Persons Unit:
1-800-543-5678
SOAP
"STAY OUT OF AREAS OF PROSTITUTION"

• Geographic areas that have been identified as areas of high prostitution activity.
• Individuals who have been convicted of prostitution may be placed on SOAP probation.

Do you have a SOAP district in your area?
Protecting our Runaway Youth

Runaway Laws

Runaway/Homeless youth are at high risk of physical abuse, sexual exploitation, mental health disabilities, substance abuse, and death. It is estimated that 5,000 unaccompanied youth die each year as a result of assault, illness, or suicide.

- In most states it is not a crime to runaway from home.
- About 40% of trafficking victims are former child victims who were forced into exploitation or once were teenage runaways.
- 75% of runaways are female
Henny Scott
Missing 12-13-18
From Lame Deer MT
Could be anywhere on
Crow or Northern Cheyenne
Reservations in MT

Age 14
Long Brown Hair
Brown Eyes
5'1" Tall
115 lbs
Mole above right eye
Light skin

Our Sister Is Missing
Please call BIA Crow Agency
(406) 638-2631
(12-18-18)
LGBTQ

• Runaway and homeless youths, male, female, two spirit, LGBTQ and transgender are at particularly high risk for becoming victims.

• Evidence also suggests that LGBTQ transgender youths can be up to five times more likely than heterosexual youths to be victims of trafficking.

• In a study of male same sex relationships, only 26% of men called the police for assistance after experiencing near-lethal violence.
This Is Preventable!
Challenges
The Data Challenge

- Indian country case statistics are taken from three different jurisdictions: Federal, state, & Tribal.
- The FBI’s Uniform Crime Report (UCR) contains criminal offense data from all three sources.
  - Data submission is voluntary (except for federal agencies),
  - counts only crimes reported to law enforcement for those agencies that choose to submit.
- Many agencies across the nation aren’t required to record native American as a race, others frequently misclassify race.
The FBI’s National Crime Information Center Database reported 9,914 missing Native American/American Indians in 2018.
American Indian/Alaska Native Missing Person Cases Published in NamUs, as of January 15, 2019

There are currently 335 American Indian/Alaska Native persons missing from 32 states entered into NamUs.

Male = 211
Female = 124
### Top 10 States With Highest Number of MMIWG Cases.
- New Mexico (78)
- Washington (71)
- Arizona (54)
- Alaska (52)
- Montana (41)
- California (40)
- Nebraska (33)
- Utah (24)
- Minnesota (20)
- Oklahoma (18)

### Top 10 Cities With Highest Number of MMIWG Cases.
- Seattle, WA (45)
- Albuquerque, NM (37)
- Anchorage, AK (31)
- Tucson, AZ (31)
- Billings, MT (29)
- Gallup, NM (25)
- Tacoma, WA (25)
- Omaha, NE (24)
- Salt Lake City, UT (24)
- San Francisco, CA (17)

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**2018 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls report by the Urban Indian Health Institute**

Co-authored by Annita Lucchesi
Even without a comprehensive database accurately recording missing and murdered Native women, the number of cases reported in the United States is shocking.

In order to address the issue we have to address the whole issue from the ground up; family, youth, community, and policy.
What’s Being Done

- Legislation
  - VAWA
  - Savanna’s Act
  - Not Invisible Act
  - State Legislation
- Awareness Events
- Support Groups
- Healing
It Doesn’t Have to Be This Way...
## Public Health & Community Solutions

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<th>Policy Change</th>
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<td>Acceptance</td>
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<td>Build Relationships</td>
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Break The Cycle Of Structural Violence

**Build Relationships**
- community, elders, youth, leaders, governments, state and tribal

**Communicate**
- FBI and Tribal leaders, state and Tribal leaders, community members and Tribal leaders, interagency (CPS, Public Health, Housing, Mental Health, Domestic Violence, Treatment Centers, Schools, etc.)

**Community Awareness**

**Education**
What Can You Do?
Use your voice, tell your story, share your gift!

“When I run about it people will notice.”
Rosalie Fish won three state titles in track at the 2019 WIAA State Track and Field event raising awareness and advocating for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.

What Can You Do?

• Inform yourself/inform your family
• Have conversations
• See something say something
• Call out violence, raise awareness about the intersections
• Engage youth in discussions
• Learn about resources and services in your community
What Can You Do?

• Host or participate in community projects
• Participate in social media campaigns
• Share posters, support families, volunteer for searches
• Participate in community information gathering
There Is Hope!

MISSING
HAVE YOU SEEN THIS PERSON?
NORMA M. HARRIS

Race: Native American
Eyes: Brown
Hair: Dark Brown w/grey
Norma is 56 years old,
5'1" and 130 lbs.

Most likely wearing a hat.
Norma recently had a stroke,
she has limited use of one hand
and suffers speech and
writing challenges.

IF YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION CALL:
(206)684-5582

MISSING SINCE NOVEMBER 17, 2017
FROM RAINIER BEACH, SEATTLE.

FOUND SAFE
Yehow
It Can Only Be Done Together
FBI still searching for Coeur d’Alene Tribe member missing for 29 years

UPDATED: Wed., March 8, 2017, 5:35 p.m.

MISSING PERSON

TINA MARIE FINLEY

Plummer, Idaho
March 8, 1988

(Courtesy FBI)
Missing Native American Woman Found Dead in Freezer Nearly a Year After Vanishing

Crime 231 PM PST, July 18, 2019 - Deborah Hastings

MISSING
Missing And Taken Indigenous People

Alillia Minthorn

Nickname Lala
Toppenish WA

Missing 5-5-19

Age 25
Black/Dark Brown Hair
Brown Eyes
5' 5" Tall
135 to 140 lbs

Tattoo on right side of neck and left side of chest. Scar under chest tattoo

If seen, or you know where "Lala" is, please call Yakama TPD (509) 865-2933 Case# 19-004114

Source: Yakama TPD, friends & family (5-14-19)
MISSING
HELP BRING ME HOME

Wanda Surratt

Missing Since: May 21, 2019
Missing From: Anchorage, AK
DOB: Sep 11, 2001
Age Now: 17
Sex: Female
Race: Am. Ind.
Hair Color: Brown
Eye Color: Brown
Height: 5’6”
Weight: 130 lbs

Both photos shown are of Wanda. She may still be in the local area.

DON’T HESITATE!
ANYONE HAVING INFORMATION SHOULD CONTACT

CALL 911 OR
1-800-843-5678 (1-800-THE-LOST®)
Anchorage Police Department (Alaska) 1-907-786-8900

Juneau police close case on woman found dead in hot tub

By Tripp J Crouse, KTOO | October 13, 2017 | Juneau | Public Safety

The Juneau Police Department says it’s closed its case on the woman found dead in a hot tub in August.

Alexis Ashley Ehlers, 28, was found dead in a hot tub eight days after being reported missing after a minor car crash.

Juneau police Lt. David Campbell said his department received the State Medical Examiner Office report on her on Oct. 9. But he said he couldn’t make it or its details public.

He did say it includes a cause of death, toxicology and that there was no evidence of trauma. Police do not suspect foul play.

The medical examiner’s office could not be reached for comment.
Family of dismembered Fort Hall mother believes she was murdered

By Shelby Harris shams@journalist.com  Jan 27, 2018  📰

Alaska woman missing for almost a week; search for her expands


FORT YUKON, Alaska (KTUU) - Search efforts were ramping up Wednesday after a woman had been missing for nearly a week in the Alaska community of Fort Yukon.
MISSING
Esther Maria Smith

Esther was last seen in the spring of 2006 in Everett, WA. She was 51 at the time of her disappearance.
Esther is Native American, 4'11" tall, about 165lbs with brown hair & eyes.
Esther was last seen leaving her sisters home in Everett on foot. She may have had some appointments in Seattle around the time of her disappearance but would never have lost contact with her family.

If you have any information to help bring Esther home please call Detective Kay Walker at: (360)416-1911
Case number:19-01718

Ten years after she called 911 and vanished, Alyssa McLemore's family is still hopeful for answers

By: Gary Horcher
Updated: Apr 10, 2019 - 8:55 AM